

REMARKS

Presently, claims 2-22 and 24-26 are pending in the application. Claims 2-6 have been rewritten to be in independent form and incorporate the subject matter of original claim 1. Claims 20 and 22 have been amended to depend from independent claim 2. Claims 24-26 have been rewritten to be in independent form and incorporate the allowable subject matter of independent claim 2. Claims 1 and 23 have been canceled. Since the claim amendments are of a formal nature, no new matter has been added to the application by the foregoing amendments.

Claim Rejections – § 103(a)

The Examiner has rejected claims 1, 23 and 24 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,208,109 to Yamai et al. ("Yamai") in view of Japanese Patent Application Publication No. 2002-262089 to Toyosaki et al. ("Toyosaki"). The Examiner has further rejected claims 25-26 as being unpatentable over Yamai in view of Toyosaki and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,334,923 to Lorenz et al.

Although not necessarily agreeing with the Examiner, Applicants have rewritten claims 2-6 in independent form to incorporate a portion of the subject matter of original claim 1. Thus, claims 2-6 are believed to be allowable. Claims 7-17 and 20-22 are allowable at least by their dependency on independent claim 2. Claims 18-19 are allowable at least by their dependency on independent claim 5. Additionally, claims 24-26 have been rewritten in independent form to incorporate the allowable subject matter of amended independent claim 2. Thus, claims 24-26 are believed to be allowable. Claims 1 and 23 have been canceled. Accordingly, the Examiner's § 103(a) rejections of claims 1, 23 and 24 is moot. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the Examiner's § 103(a) rejections are respectfully requested.

Allowable Subject Matter

The Examiner has objected to claims 2-22 but stated that these claims would be allowable if rewritten to be in independent form and to include all limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Applicants thank the Examiner for this indication of allowable subject matter.

In view of the amendments set forth above, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 2-6, and all claims dependent thereon, are allowable. Thus, claims 7-17 and 20-22 are allowable at least by their dependency on claim 2. Claims 18 and 19 are allowable at least by their dependency on claim 5. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the Examiner's objection to claims 2-22 are respectfully requested.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that the Examiner's rejections have been overcome, and that the application, including claims 2-22 and 24-26, is in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the Examiner's rejections and an early Notice of Allowance are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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(Date)

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